

THE IBIS.

NINTH SERIES.

No. II. APRIL 1907.

IX.--*On the Display of the King Bird-of-Paradise*
(*Cicinnurus regius*). By Sir WILLIAM J. INGRAM, Bt.

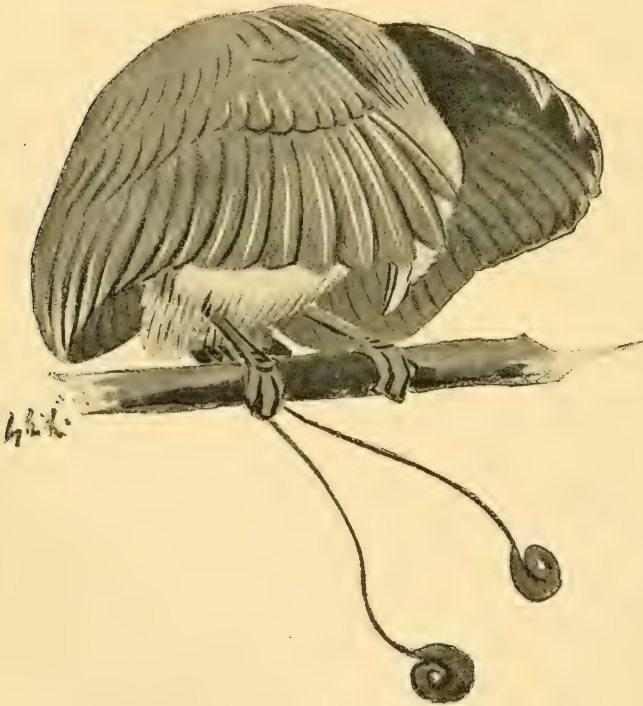
(Plate V.)

ALTHOUGH the wonderful displays of the Greater and Lesser Birds-of-Paradise have already been described (*cf.* Ogilvie-Grant, *Ibis*, 1905, p. 429), I believe that up to the present it has never been the good fortune of any collector or ornithologist to witness the extraordinary love-song and dance of the King-Bird (*Cicinnurus regius*). I have for some time had in my possession a fine male of this species, and on many occasions have been able to see him go through his astonishing display. My bird was brought from New Guinea (Aru Islands) along with several other Birds-of-Paradise, of which, unfortunately, all but one were males. They arrived in fair condition—seventeen examples of *Paradisea apoda*, one of *P. minor*, and two males and one female of the King-Bird. I had the bad luck to lose on the day of their arrival the female and one male of the last-named species. The survivor, however, rapidly became accustomed to his new quarters, a cage about thirty inches in length and height, and eighteen inches in breadth. In this he has gone through his moult, casting first of all his long tail-wires tipped

with spirals of iridescent green. He commenced moulting in January, and regained his brilliant plumage by the middle of March, since which time he has remained in the most perfect condition.

It was not until April that we first noticed any signs of a wish to display, and then only on one or two occasions, with

Text-fig. 8.



The King Bird-of-Paradise. (First stage of display.)

many days' interval between. On these occasions he gave only a single performance—but now in August we can get him to give us *encore* after *encore* any day that we wish. We have found that to place the bird near a window which is close to some mulberry-trees, and throws a reflected green light on the cage, is a sure means of inducing him



G. E. LODGE, DEL.]

[WITHERBY & CO., SCULP. ET IMP.

THE KING BIRD-OF-PARADISE

(In full display).

to give a performance—maybe the green shade reminds him of his former home in the depths of a tropical forest.

He always commences his display by giving forth several short separate notes and squeaks, sometimes resembling the call of a Quail, sometimes the whine of a pet dog. Next he spreads out his wings, occasionally quite hiding his head

Text-fig. 9.



The King Bird-of-Paradise. (Full display.)

(text-fig. 8, p. 226); at times, stretched upright, he flaps them, as if he intended to take flight, and then, with a sudden movement, gives himself a half-turn so that he faces the spectators, puffing out his silky-white lower feathers (Plate V.). Now he bursts out into his beautiful melodious warbling song, so enchanting to hear but so difficult to

describe. Some weeks ago I was crossing a meadow and heard the song of a Skylark high up in the heavens and I exclaimed at once, "That is the love-chant of my King-Bird." He sings with a low bubbling note, displaying all the while his beautiful fan-like side-plumes, which he opens and closes, in time with the variations of his song. These fan-plumes can only be expanded when his wings are closed, and during this part of the display he closes his wings and spreads out his short tail, pressing it close over his back so as to throw the long tail-wires over his head, while he gently swings his body from side to side. The spiral tips of the wires look like small balls of burnished green metal, and the swaying movement gives them the effect of being slowly tossed from one side to the other, so that I have named this part of the display the "Juggling" (text-fig. 9, p. 227). The swaying of the body seems to keep time with the song, and at intervals, with a swallowing movement of his throat, the bird raises and lowers his head. Then comes the finale, which lasts only for a few seconds. He suddenly turns right round and shews his back, the white fluffy feathers under the tail bristling in his excitement; he bends down on the perch in the attitude of a fighting cock, his widely opened bill shewing distinctly the extraordinary light apple-green colour of the gullet, and sings the same gurgling notes without once closing his bill, and with a slow dying-away movement of his tail and body. A single drawn-out note is then uttered, the tail and wires are lowered, and the dance and song are over.

The King-Bird has another form of display which he very rarely exhibits, and only on three or four occasions have I seen him go through this performance. Dropping under the perch the bird walks backwards and forwards in an inverted position with his wings expanded. Suddenly he closes his wings and lets his body fall straight downwards, looking exactly like a crimson pear, his blue legs being stretched out to their full length and his feet clinging to the perch. The effect is very curious and weird, and the performance is so like that of an acrobat suddenly dropping on to his toes on the cross-bar of a trapeze that I have named this the

“Acrobatic” display. It has been witnessed on different days to his “Juggling” display. While giving his Acrobatic performance he sings the whole time, but never shews his side-plumes; and when he is in the pendulous position his body sways gently as if it were influenced by a fitful breeze. The whole of this performance takes but a very few seconds.

The drawings by Mr. G. E. Lodge (Plate V. and text-figures 8 & 9) were sketched from life, the bird having given him a continuous exhibition of his display of nearly an hour’s duration.

X.—*On the Anatomy and Systematic Position of the Colies.*

By W. P. PYCRAFT, F.Z.S., A L.S., M.B.O.U., &c.

- | | |
|--|---|
| I. Introduction, p. 229. | IV. Osteology, p. 240. |
| II. Pterylography, p. 230. | V. Summary, p. 249. |
| III. Myology, Syrinx, and Intestinal Convolutions, p. 237. | VI. References to previous Works, p. 253. |

I. INTRODUCTION.

WHEN, some months since, Dr. Selater asked me to contribute a paper to ‘The Ibis’ on the anatomy of the Colies, with especial regard to the systematic position of these aberrant birds, it seemed to me that little that was new remained to be said. For, in addition to Dr. Murie’s monograph on the skeleton (11) which appeared in ‘The Ibis’ so far back as 1872, a number of contributions have been made by other writers dealing with the pterylosis, myology, and intestinal convolutions.

Nevertheless, I have been enabled to add some new facts, as well as to correct, here and there, mis-statements or errors of interpretation, such as will creep in, even when the greatest care is taken to ensure accuracy.

In the course of my work I have received very material assistance from Dr. Selater, and also from my friend Mr. D. Seth-Smith; both these gentlemen having furnished